

The Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee (CPIC) explores Conservation Subdivisions for Harpswell

Certainly one of the aspects that the people of Harpswell appreciate most about this town is its rural, friendly atmosphere. However, with Harpswell's comparatively low tax rate, beautiful environment, closeness to Boston and Portland and the improving economy more and more people will want to build homes here.

Our current two acre subdivision zoning does nothing to preserve our advantages, and cluster zoning with it cramped lots does little more. However, the CPIC thinks it may have an answer. Conservation subdivisions provide for both growth and development. Conservation subdivisions combine compact lots intelligently arranged with open space that features community valued amenities, such as stone walls, views, trees, buildings and fields.

Conservation subdivision design requires careful attention to site planning to delineate areas to be protected as open space and areas to be developed as home sites. Ideally, a conservation design will identify unique, scenic, or significant natural features of a site to be preserved in large contiguous blocks. Homes and lots are then laid out to maximize visual and physical access to the open space by the residents. The combined effect of the protected open space and the clustered homes results in an average overall density no greater than the density achieved using a conventional subdivision design. An easement or other mechanism for preserving the open space ensures that the open space will not be developed.

For more information visit the town website, <http://www.harpswell.maine.gov/>, then choose Town Departments, then Planning, then Boards/Committees/Commissions, then Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee. There you can access a movie showing Conservation Subdivisions, a brochure created by the CPIC and other information. For still more information contact Carol Eyerman, town planner at 833-5771 or Burr Taylor, CPIC chair, at 725-2802. The CPIC welcomes feedback and needs more members.